HOMILETIC THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

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HOMILETIC THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

More Joy

The Poor Souls in Purgatory

HOMILETIC THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

BY THE

RT. REV. PAUL WILLIAM VON KEPPLER, D.D.
LATE BISHOP OF ROTTENBURG

Translated by the
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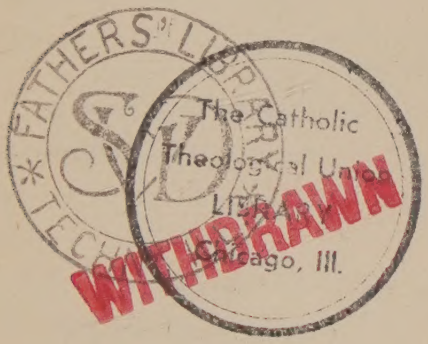

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Paul William von Keppler was born on the 28th of September, 1852, and died on the 6th of July, 1926. He was for twenty-seven years Bishop of Rottenburg. In every sense his death was a great loss, not only to his diocese, but to the Church at large. He was a champion of the homily and devoted his scholarship and the practical experience of a life-time to reviving and establishing the study and practice of homiletics. His advent pericopes are perfect specimens of homiletic form and fine examples of his absolute command of the art of sacred oratory.

To honour his memory and extend the influence of those principles which he so ably and faithfully illustrated in precept and practice, an attempt has been made to translate the Bishop's treatise, *Homiletische Gedanken und Ratschläge,* into English for the benefit of priests in English-speaking countries.

I have endeavoured to give the Bishop's words as literally as possible, and to preserve his meaning when the German idiom or word had no equivalent in English speech. A very few passages have been omitted, as they deal exclusively with local and temporary conditions, or apply only to certain Teutonic characteristics, and would seem to be inapplicable except in Germany and to the clergy to whom the Bishop was lecturing. Well aware of a certain deficiency in the translation, I yet hope that some of the force and fire of the original may possibly survive in the English rendering, and if this modest attempt to enlarge the sphere of Dr. von Keppler's influence will tend to interest all priests in their ministry of preaching and deepen the spiritual message they are commissioned to bear, the arduous work of translating will not have been in vain.

H. M.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The First Homiletic Congress was held at Ravensburg from the 13th to the 15th of September, 1910, and was numerously attended by clergy from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Three lectures had been assigned to the author on the subject of present-day preaching. While the duty which thus devolved upon him was one that required doing, yet it could only be done in an incomplete and fragmentary manner. It required a survey of the entire field of homiletics; an examination into the nature and productivity of the soil; an enquiry into the best system of cultivation to ensure fruitful results, and consideration of improvements in management and working. Needless to say, such a survey could at best be but cursory because of the vast extent of the subject-matter and the limited time at my disposal.

The lecture was based on the following twelve points:

1. If preaching is to be *abreast of the times,*

it must proclaim the saving truth of Christianity (Christ), whole and entire, to the present generation; account being taken of the present state of civilisation, of the intellectual and moral condition of our people, but in such wise as to utilise that which is serviceable and advantageous, to exclude or repress what is adverse or hostile to our purpose, and to emphasise all that is especially needed at the present moment. This will involve a *reconstruction of the sermon both in content and form;* and while avoiding any enticement to novelty, preserve the integrity of substance, the standpoint of faith, and the eternal bearing of the message.

2. The present *high standard of scholarship and education* is all to the advantage of preaching. It demands more than ever a firm grasp and clear view of the religious and moral truths and principles and avoidance of the didactic tone. An *increasing tendency inimical to the faith* necessitates the use of the weapons of apologetics, but the main thing is *the positive exposition of religious truth.* The light dispels the darkness by the very fact that it shines.

3. The *social movement* requires no social

preaching, but the preaching of the saving truths of Christianity applied as much as possible and as far as circumstances permit to questions and conditions. We must show the dignity of labour, educate the workers, train the faithful in social ethics and arouse in them a sense of social responsibility.

4. The *cult of personality*—the individualistic trait of the present day—does not impose any new tasks on the preacher, but merely accentuates, and to a certain extent facilitates, the chief function of the sermon, which is the cure of souls, to point to Christ as the highest ideal of personality, and to the imitation of Christ as the only way to attain to spiritual freedom and intellectual vigour and dominion.

5. The current interest in ethical and educational questions; the endeavours of the so-called "Ethical Culture" Societies quite as much as the undeniable decline in public *morality,* necessitate and demand a particularly conscientious treatment of these and kindred subjects. Nothing is to be achieved by strict insistence on obedience to commandments and duties. Of importance are:—a thorough incentive for, and training in, free obe-

dience; equal insistence upon the active and "passive" virtues; taking into account and employing the natural principles as well as the supernatural values and aims of Christian morality; while taking a firm stand on the ground of daily experience and keeping our glance fixed on the eternal Christian ideals.

6. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Is. XL, I. Preach joyfully and *preach joy.*

7. More effectual and important than all homiletic rules is *a pure intention,* which both in its estimate of the preaching office and in the delivery of each sermon keeps in touch with and seeks to be in union with the spirit and purpose of the preacher's exalted mission, and spares no pains to offer in each sermon *its very own and very best.* The mere desire to make an impression, an egoistic purpose, or any secondary aims, can only mar the effect, cramp the aspirations, falsify pathos, and spoil both the sermon and the character of the preacher.

8. The prevalence of scepticism, a realistic tendency, and a certain degeneracy and carelessness in modern character demand caution and discrimination in the use of *pathos.* To dispense

altogether with its use would be to forego a fundamental force in oratory. What should be avoided is a false and unreal pathos both in sermon and delivery.

9. *Style* in preaching demands hard work and assiduous endeavor. One must not be chary of ideas. The style should bear the stamp of truth, naturalness, and simplicity. Rhetoric, rightly understood and correctly employed, is a help and not a hindrance.

10. The *time limit.* As a general rule, half an hour suffices. In order not to exceed this time limit, make a better preparation. Long-winded introductions and perorations are fatal defects in a sermon.

11. *Delivery.* The main point is for the preacher to become accustomed to hear himself preach, and to control, criticise, and constantly improve his delivery. An elementary requisite is correct and intelligible enunciation. There should be no unnatural monotony or isotony, but the voice should maintain *a slightly raised conversational tone,* rising and falling in accordance with the demands of the subject.

12. Absolutely inopportune and ill-timed are *ennui in preaching* and *pessimism.* Μετὰ πάσης

παρρησίας, should be our motto: this is the apostolic virtue in preaching.

It was not to be expected that these twelve propositions should receive detailed treatment in three lectures. The following pages contain the substance of the lectures with certain necessary additions.

HOMILETIC THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS

I

ENNUI

It is said that the countenance and cultural life of humanity show unmistakable signs of fatigue. This may be due to the reflex action of the restless activity of men, their search and pursuit of enjoyment. The modern man seems to be tired and weary especially in his religious life. Between the two enemy camps of those who esteem religion as the highest blessing and those who deem it of no account, are large groups of men who are indifferent to religion,—neither hot nor cold; or already dead to its influence. It will not therefore cause surprise if complaints are heard that our people are weary, that—a kind of sleeping sickness is prevalent among them and infects even the clergy.

Here in Germany we are not yet forced to preach to empty pews. In the country districts, as a rule, the people attend church regularly. In the cities, however, here and there, there is a noticeable falling off in attendance and a straying from the pulpit message, even among such as otherwise strictly fulfil their Sunday obligation. But even aside from this, there is scarcely a preacher who has not in sombre moments been affected by a doubt as to the present efficacy of preaching in comparison with the past. Is the pulpit still potent to penetrate the atmosphere of lassitude and fatigue, to reverse modern thought, awaken life, and influence conduct?

Thus internal and external necessities confront us with the question: How should we preach? How can the sermon be suited to our times? The question has been asked: In an age of machinery, of schools and journalism, science and art, railroads, electricity, and aëronautics, should not the form and style of preaching be changed? We will not dismiss the question, for we have the testimony of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, who a century ago was deeply impressed by the same problem, that the Gospel must be preached anew!

The right answer to these questions, to be of practical value, must be based upon a correct judgment of the present age and of the intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral condition of modern society. It is possible only to give side-lights—to direct attention to those phases of modern culture that are specially significant for purposes of homiletic study. The situation can only be sketched in broad outline: how far this outline is applicable to any particular parish or congregation, each preacher must determine for himself.

II

MODERN SCIENCE

In the forward march of civilisation, science undoubtedly was the standard-bearer. With unprecedented zeal every sphere in the domain of science has been attacked and occupied with the best working forces and disposed in far-spread operations. With methodic exactitude results have been achieved, discoveries made, inventions multiplied, so as to astonish even those who do not forget that the pioneer work was done, and the foundations of progress were laid, in the past.

Science and intellectual culture have become the chief cultural forces of the present day and their endeavour naturally is to still farther extend their domain. As a matter of fact the manifold attempts to popularize the achievements of science; the increase and cheapening of educational means; the extension of the press; the development of the school-system from the elementary

to the highest grades—all this has essentially changed and elevated the cultural standards of the people and enhanced the pursuit of knowledge and the striving after truth.

Are these considerations to be regarded as favourable or unfavourable from the homiletic point of view? They are *per se* favourable. Preaching has no need to fear either science or culture. Indeed the progress of science affords us ever fresh help, new proofs, new weapons, and a more refined process of demonstration. The schools train our hearers and enable us to raise the standard of our instructions. We should, therefore, never undervalue or disdain science and culture: to do so would be unjustifiable and retrogressive. Rather should we seek to keep in close touch with these progressive movements, in order to make use of their ascertained results and to put the sane and genuine elements they furnish in the service of God's Word, while carefully distinguishing between truth and error.

But we cannot rest in this general and ideal manner of contemplation. The fact is evident that strained relations do exist between culture and preaching. Science and religion are at war. The

main fault is certainly not on the side of the preachers. Whenever the ideals of culture go astray; when science tries to displace the preaching of truth, to oust the sermon, and to set herself up as the preacher of unbelief and irreligion, then a conflict becomes inevitable. This to a large extent is happening to-day. Unbelief would never have been able to penetrate into the masses without the nimbus of culture, without the armour and weapons of science.

When culture overestimates knowledge and develops the intellect onesidedly, especially if it is tinged with atheism, it forces the preacher to adopt a defensive and an offensive attitude. True, the preaching of the faith at all times involved the fighting of unbelief and unbelief sought to obtain its weapons from the arsenal of science; but the conflict was probably never so strenuous and painful as now; never did it seem, as now, as if it were a fight against science and culture *per se:*—a most untimely struggle with a world-power of the present day.

Though the preacher has a harder task to face on this account, he ought not to allow himself to be intimidated or discouraged. True science is

still our strongest ally. Unbelieving pseudo-science has lost credit and is deeply compromised by her unscientific overstepping of limits and competence, by her arrogance and her unwarranted and altogether unscientific intrusion of her laws and methods into many higher spheres, which lie wholly outside her province,—nay by dishonest statements and notorious forgeries (Haeckel). The foolish idea that science can replace faith and religion, solve all life's problems and make men happy, is beginning to fade. Our opponents are already preparing to raise an altar to another goddess, *i. e.*, Art.

This one-sided culture of the intellect, of which the defects are becoming more and more evident, the destructive, disintegrating domination of the intellect separated from the total life of the soul, unbelieving science with all its efforts to become popular, have left a void in the hearts and souls of men and awakened a feverish longing for the higher and eternal verities. It may be possible for a time to deny and ignore the supernatural and the hereafter; but in the long run soul and spirit will not allow themselves to be shut up within the narrow confines of the temporal. "There is noth-

ing that humanity will submit to less readily than a frivolous treatment of the main questions of its happiness and existence," says Eucken, and frivolous indeed was the treatment of these matters by the religious nihilists in the toga of scholarship. Yet in truth they were working for us. The more one insists, in the words of Jean Paul, upon making the world into a machine, resolving God into force, and enclosing the hereafter in a coffin, the more strongly does the immortal element in man assert itself. Eucken was doubtless right in discerning another mighty wave of religious revival following from afar upon the storm of materialistic science. Interest in religion, however oddly men may turn aside into strange byways, is again on the increase. In spite of all so-called culture, the preacher was never so much needed as to-day. Starved souls, thirsting for the eternal truth, cry for us across the void of earthly and visible things.

III

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

MODERN culture is more deeply imbued with social tendencies than influenced by scientific research. The social question claims priority among present-day problems and absorbs the interest, strength, and life of thousands. *Per se* there is no reason why the regulation of labour and wages and an interest in social questions should alienate a man from religion and Christianity, except, and in so far as, such considerations may involve the danger of forgetting the things of God, of the soul, and of eternity in the absorbing pursuit of material happiness. It was an evil fate that impelled this movement to adopt an attitude hostile to religion and the Church. Socialism has become pagan, and is the declared enemy of the faith, and whoever follows its banner is lost to us. Thousands of workers are consequently impervious to the truths which we preach.

This state of things has given rise to the idea,—not so much within as outside the Catholic body,—that preachers must adopt a new style—the social sermon,—place themselves firmly on the ground of the present and occupy themselves mainly with social problems, great and small, to entice the workers back into the Church by means of political economy and social reform proposals.

The preacher in the twentieth century must, of course, keep in touch with the social movement, study it closely, and watch its influence on the people. But to cope with the situation he does not need to preach *Socialism,* but simply to proclaim the truths of Christianity, which the workingman needs, more than others, and to labour for the conversion, salvation, and edification of souls.

This is the kind of preaching that is specially needed when social problems occupy public attention. It alone can expose and overcome the hollowness, weakness, and inefficiency of Socialism. Thus the sermon may become an important contribution towards the solution of the social question. The preacher with such a message, containing the very core and kernel of Christianity, if

with intelligent tact and kindness he enters into the problems, wants, anxieties, and perplexities of the working men, conscientiously explaining to them the "one thing needful," keeping them true to God and Christ, will retain the allegiance of the well-disposed and win back many who have strayed away from the Church.

It would be mistaken and uncalled for to yield to cowardly despair, to give up preaching as useless in the face of the boisterous flood of the Socialistic advance. A sense of joyous courage is what we need. Christianity has a right to take part in the solution of the social question. The Christian preacher should exhibit Christianity as a great social force, assist it in the attainment of its ideals, and direct its strength into the right channels. It is a mission that is by no means hopeless. In the ranks of workingmen, too, there are yearners after God; many are hungering for His Word in consequence of the nature of their work, which offers no satisfaction to heart and mind, and the one-sided insistence on material class-interests, the neglect of the needs of the soul, and the illusive promise of a glorious future that never comes.

IV

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

THERE is an individualistic trait in modern culture which with a certain degree of pride has been called the cult of personality.

This high appreciation of the personality, this pronounced self-consciousness, is quite characteristic of modern man. Its phraseology shows an under-current of self-exaltation. In former times there was less talk of personality, but the number of real and complete personalities was greater than it is to-day. Despite this new cult, notwithstanding a greater external and social liberty, one meets with much more intellectual, moral, and social slavery; with much more impersonal and restricted herding together under the pressure of human respect; with a characterless, unmanly subserviency to the idols of the day, public opinion, the press, parties; and with the ravages of alcoholism and immorality under the curse of impulse, mood, and inclination.

Nevertheless, personality is not a mere catch phrase: it stands for a real and a great thing. The very fact that it is spoken about and sought after, implies a wholesome reaction from the dominance of the individual under social pressure the much overestimated power of "milieu," and the tyranny of the afore-named forces.

The idea of personality required a considerable time to reach its present influence in modern society. Kant and Schleiermacher transferred it from the height of metaphysical speculation to the level of ethical experience; Goethe hailed it as "the highest treasure of the children of this earth." But it was not until Stirner and Nietzsche inspired it with their spirit that the idea of personality became popular and powerful.

Now that which was sublime in the idea has degenerated into a kind of street arab prone to all kinds of mischief, threatening authority, infringing every right, scorning dogma, law, and custom, riding roughshod over everything, seeking only the unlimited gratification of every instinct. The proud phrase "cult of personality" is but a euphemism for naked egotism, inconsiderate self-assertion, libertinism, moral anarchy, and sav-

agery. It is in this sense that modern youth interprets the phrase, and thus a generation is growing up with a sickly, overstrained self-esteem, living at fever pitch and giving rein to every natural impulse,—a generation which gives parents, masters and superiors much anxiety.

All this is a disturbing element in the life of the preacher and in his pastoral work. The new cult is a dangerous foe to encounter. Youth, impregnated with these notions, is beyond the influence of preaching, and we have to reckon with the fact that most of our hearers, consciously or unconsciously, are affected by these errors. This renders the office of the preacher more onerous. On the other hand, it is just this perverted estimate of personality that calls us into the arena and affords us a means of access to the modern man. Christianity knows how to value personality. It has been truly said that the greatest cultural achievement of Christianity is precisely this, that it sets the individual above the masses, and singles out for spiritual attention and direction each single unit in the crowd. Christianity is the great cultural force which created and still creates per-

sonalities; it is itself a person, as it were. The preaching of Christianity has as its ultimate purpose the formation and development of Christlike personalities.

At the present time Christian preaching has for its aim to give substance, direction, and purpose to the sickly, confused, and distorted cult of personality. The preacher's duty is to re-awaken mankind to a consciousness of the fact that a sane, capable, and happy personality is not acquired by breaking through the restraints of religion, by denying authority or showing defiance and disobedience, nor by delivering up the better self to the sway of natural impulses and passions, but solely by the exercise of humble faith, voluntary obedience, and the discipline of the will, work and self-conquest by suffering and mortification. These are duties which the preacher must never tire of enforcing; and having at hand the most modern point of view, he can bring the truth home to his hearers. Truly we shall be rendering the greatest service to mankind by bringing into clearer light the true idea of personality and indicating the way to acquire it; by translating a

catch-phrase into an ideal, converting gloomy impulse into radiant energy, changing a poisonous draft into a healing medicine.

V

THE MORAL SPHERE

In this connection reference must be made to the decline of public morality and the dissemination of corrupting influences. This vitiated atmosphere, both the result as well as the cause of the decay of religion, adds to the difficulties of preaching. However undeniable this fact, there is no ground for discouragement. Out of the darkness and gloom of modern existence appeals for help arise and thousands of helpless hands are stretching out to us in their need. The cancers of immorality and alcoholism are spreading and threatening the faith. The "mystery of iniquity" is at work, and the views and habits of an increasing number of persons are not only immoral, but consciously anti-moral. Infernal attempts are being made to spread the evil, especially among the young, by depreciating the ideals of chastity and undermining the foundations of moral conduct.

Such behaviour brings its own retribution, and already the penalty is weighing so heavily upon the present generation that a wholesome reaction is perceptible.

A sense of shame at the low level of society, a conviction of sin and misery, are evident signs of the times that cannot be overlooked. As we realise the psychical depression in which humanity is languishing, devoid of joy or peace, we are stirred to sympathy rather than indignation. Even the men of the world, the enthusiastic heralds of modern culture, admit this. Many of them welcomed the publication of my book, "More Joy," acknowledging that the conditions of modern life are unfavourable to happiness.

It is just these very experiences, heart-ache and home-sickness of the soul, qualms of conscience, a craving for joy and comfort that are promoting the cause of God and his Church. They secure a hearing for the preacher and give effect to his message.

As a further consideration this moral decline has every right to be regarded as a serious reverse to the anti-Christian forces in their determined attempt to obliterate ethical ideals by belittling

and reproaching Christian morality and teaching as antiquated and retrograde, while they proclaim their high-flown prophecies of a new era of morality. They profess to conduct mankind along new paths to the moral heights, whereas these paths in reality lead men deeper and deeper into the mire. This shameful reverse has served to strengthen the status and position of Christian preaching. There is ample justification for the sermon, and we may take fresh courage, and with entire confidence, and a valuable experience to back us, continue to labour for the moral education of the masses.

VI

OUR TASK

In the foregoing remarks many other points might have been noticed as characteristic of modern culture, but such only have been selected as seemed to be most important and essential to our purpose.

If present-day preaching is to be abreast of the times, it must be prepared to reckon with the conditions of modern culture and the tendencies of the age; it must be able to oppose and overcome hostility and opposition and know how to make use of such influences as are serviceable and favourable to our cause. Such an endeavour will necessarily involve a certain change and reconstruction, both in form and style, of the sermon: but we must not speak of what may and ought to be changed, until we have emphatically drawn attention to that which under all circumstances must be retained,—the kernel and gist of the sermon, the abiding substance of our message.

VII

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SERMON

"The doctrine which we preach is that to which we have been committed." (Rom. VI, 17.) It is the teaching of Jesus Christ, transmitted through the Church: the Christian and Catholic Creed, the deposit of the faith, which we are bound to dispense with the utmost conscientiousness, so that the faithful of the XXth century may make it their very own. This is our mission and upon this rests our authority. We are answerable, as preachers, that the parish and every single soul in it be well grounded and established in the faith, that religious instruction be developed beyond the school period, so as to include all essential points of doctrine and morality. Like the Apostles, we, too, must be able to affirm that we are "clear from the blood of all men," in so far as we have not ceased to "declare all the counsel of God." (Acts XX, 26.)

However true it may be that humanity, whether from an exaggerated self-consciousness or for other reasons, cherishes a deep-seated aversion to authoritative teaching, and that weariness in believing and distaste for dogmas prevail widely nowadays, we may not, on that account, relinquish one iota of our teaching authority or of the content of our preaching, though, of course, we must guard against undue stressing of our authority and exaggerating the claims of faith upon our people.

The present generation is inclined to criticism and realism; it is a sickly race, weak in faith and shy of miracles; but we must not depart from our fixed standpoint, by watering down Christian doctrine, eliminating or disregarding miracles, or obliterating hard and fast lines of demarcation, diluting dogma and playing fast and loose with symbolic forms, or reading a different meaning into the plain sentences of the catechism. We may not, to suit the age, smuggle into our sermons a new world of ideas and substitute quotations from Schiller and Goethe and Ibsen for the plain words of Holy Scripture. We must rather emphatically proclaim the warning of the Prince of the Apostles

(1 Pet. V, 8,): "Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

No reasons, however plausible, should tempt us to such a base betrayal of the truth or to such despicable infidelity to our mission. Do not speak about a rapprochement, nor think that modern unbelief can be met halfway by splitting the truth and the obligation to believe. Any approach across an abyss is out of the question, unless one would risk falling into the deep. Neither can you bridge over the chasm by means of compromises. In matters of faith and salvation there can be no compromise. The words of Prof. Max Müller apply here: "I have a horror of compromises; they always ring false." There is only one way to bridge this chasm; it is conversion to the faith. Let us help in throwing this bridge across the void, and by every legitimate means in our power render the approach to it accessible and the passage across it safe.

However well-meant the intention may be of ingratiating and winning over modern society by an endeavour to discover points of contact and agreement between it and the Catholic faith, there

can be no justification for a double falsehood. We must not be false to the truth we are commissioned to preach, nor to those to whom we preach it. Least of all may we adopt the miserable expedient of the line of least resistance, with a view to hold together the faithful and to win over weaklings by reducing the obligation of faith and morals to a minimum. This minimism is dictated by cowardice and weakness and can only produce cowardice and weakness.

Our first rule must be: We are officially and in conscience bound to proclaim *opportune, importune* the truth of our holy faith, whole and entire, for it alone can bring light and life, redemption and salvation to this generation. This does not, however, exclude, but includes both in the enunciation and the exposition of the truth and its application to life, any and every use of oratory and rhetoric and due regard to the particular circumstances and needs of our hearers.

VIII

THE STANDPOINT OF FAITH

It might be thought that the proclamation of all the truths of revelation, based upon the authority of the Church and demanding the assent of religious belief, would not accord with the spirit of the times. Yet there is nothing more appropriate or more necessary than to re-awaken humanity to reverence and willing faith. We must endeavour by earnestness and gentleness as well as by severity and love to produce these dispositions. Again and again we shall have to reiterate that the only reasonable attitude of the soul towards God is that of reverent faith; that the "*anima naturaliter christiana et catholica*" is a believing soul who can find contentment and rest only in the faith; that individual reason cannot possibly constitute itself judge and court of highest resort in matters of belief; that according to the saying "*credo ut intelligam*," a reverent acceptance of the truth is

a prerequisite for its comprehension; that faith does not enslave, but ennobles the soul, is not derogatory to our true self, but uplifts and sets us free; whilst unbelief, on the contrary, fetters, blinds, and cramps the soul.

Faith is indicative of health and strength of soul, whereas unbelief is a symptom of mental and spiritual weakness and abnormality. Unbelief has no right to pose as the child of science, since its natural offspring are error and superstition, the worst enemies of truth and science. The Church in demanding faith "does not require a sacrifice of the intellect, but only a sacrifice of arrogance." (F. W. Foerster.)

Without exaggeration or injustice, but also without any disguise and weak surrender, we must expose the prevalent unbelief, warning men against the danger of infection and rendering our people immune from attack. It is beside the point if our enemies point to the vast number of infidels, particularly in the ranks of scientists. This is no argument against the truth of our faith and against Christianity. In most cases the gregarious instinct and youthful inexperience drive men into

the camp of unbelievers. A large number of those who are experts in their respective branches of science are ignorant and incompetent in the sphere of faith.

While holding science in high esteem and acknowledging the progress of scientific research, we are nevertheless, in proving the necessity of faith, justified in exposing the distraction, aimlessness, and lack of method among modern intellectuals and the increasing uncertainty which prevails among them in questions of the highest import. Infidel science, whose last word is *"ignoramus et ignorabimus,"* when assuming the public rôle of a teacher of religion, a preacher of truth and an instructor in morality, becomes a laughing stock. We need not be always inculcating the duty to believe, but should dwell upon the happy privilege of faith, the blessing of having an authority in religion removed from all possibility of error; the gift of truth and the grace to accept it, which surpasses all natural science and dwells in hearts of good-will as a source of light and life.

We need to remind ourselves that the best pre-

servative against diminution and loss of faith is a spirit of constant heartfelt thanksgiving for the truths of faith and the grace which enables us to accept them whole-heartedly.

IX

DOUBTS AGAINST THE FAITH

The tendency to doubt is the main road to unbelief. Modern humanity cherishes doubt as its dearest offspring and claims the right to call into doubt everything, even to the extent of absurdity. The latest symptom of this tendency is to discredit the historical existence of Christ. It behoves us, therefore, to clear up doubts concerning faith, to investigate their sources, hunt out their secret lurking places, and to tear off the mask of learning and intellectuality. It is our duty to demonstrate that doubt is in itself no sign of a healthy intellectual or spiritual life, but an indication that something is wrong; that the doubting habit is a kind of consumption, which usually induces the death of faith and endangers sound thinking and the scientific sense.

Always, however, we must judge cautiously and leniently. The whole mental atmosphere at

the present time is so contaminated by doubt, and the foes of the faith are so busy cultivating the virus and infecting youth with it, that sometimes it is not possible, even with the most judicious religious instruction, to preserve the young mind from contamination. The times demand a sound strategy on our part in order to meet and confound doubt by anticipation; we must build up an outwork of apologetic instruction, promote a wholesome state of mind, and train the powers of the soul to resist the temptation to doubt.

Doubts may arise spontaneously from the natural and licit desire of the mind to inquire into the truths of faith; or they may be suggested by external influences. They need not be driven out, but should be made use of to gain a clearer orientation in matters of faith. Doubts may become temptations, but even as such they are not culpable; but, if mastered and overcome in the right spirit, may conduce to a strengthening of the faith. On the other hand, a doubt that is but inflated pride, that throws aside all reverence and respect for authority, gives vent to frivolous speech, and forces its way into the domain of faith of other souls, conspiring with immorality and secret evil,

is a septic wound, corrupting and dangerous. In such cases only the surgeon's knife can avail to effect a radical cure.

It cannot be too often or too insistently repeated that a faith imperilled by doubt is not likely to be saved by arguments and disputations alone. Faith is a supernatural gift—a grace, which on the human side is a matter, not only of the intellect, but also of the will. Above all it demands an honest and pure will, humble prayer, adherence to and inherence in the faith by the acceptance of the moral obligations which it imposes. "Even so it is, brethren, believe the precepts of God and do them, and there shall be given to you the strength of understanding." (St. Aug., Serm., CXVIII, 17.) "Believe, that you may understand; for unless you believe, you will not understand." (S. Aug., Trad. Symb. I, 1.).

X

THE THOUGHT OF ETERNITY

The chief trend of modern culture, philosophy, and ethics is doubtless realistic and materialistic. Much of the thought, interest and aim of the men of to-day is limited by the finite and terrestrial. The soul seems to have lost its power of transcending time and space, and the sense of the supernatural and eternal seems to have disappeared. How is the preacher to make his message intelligible to such a generation? Would it not seem advisable to keep the supernatural and transcendental aspects of Christianity in the background, and as much as possible to deal with present-day interests? Such a concession would be disastrous, criminal, and foolish. It would be disastrous and criminal because it would rob the Christian sermon of its power, influence, and purpose; it would profane the sacred message by the intrusion of temporal, worldly, and political questions and

interests, and would amount to a betrayal of eternal truth and of our mission to proclaim it. Apart from occasional aberrations at certain critical periods, the Catholic pulpit has heeded the Apostolic warning to "shun profane and vain babblings," for they grow much towards ungodliness, and their speech spreadeth like a canker." (2 Tim. II, 16).

To attempt to create interest and secure attention by such methods is foolish, and sure to fail, like most appeals to curiosity. Worldlings would know where they would be better served to suit their purpose; and souls in search of truth would be offended and repelled by hearing the clamour of the world and its news from the pulpit.

Now, precisely because of the needs of the present time we must let our sermons declare the supernatural origin and eternal content of Christian doctrine, unhindered and uncurtailed. We must preach Christ in all simplicity and emphasise the fact that His religion is directed towards another world. Just because the present generation is so entangled in the affairs of this world, the temporal and visible, we need to dwell all the more emphatically upon "the powers of the world to come"

(Heb. VI, 5), to break through the limitations of time and space, and to ease the yoke of daily routine.

In proportion as we fulfil this duty, shall we answer and satisfy the souls longing for deliverance from the bondage of sin and win the gratitude of those who hunger and thirst after justice, and are homesick for Heaven and for that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

"Time is impressed only by what is above it,—eternity. To preach without reference to eternity, is to present salt which has lost its savour, or like a hearth that does not give out warmth. By its reference to eternity a sermon exerts an influence beyond time."

We must, of course, beware of a one-sided idealism and supernaturalism. We must not soar high up into the clouds, above the heads of our hearers. The preacher must have "the two eyes" which a medieval writer attributes to our Lord: one, whose gaze is fixed upon eternity, while the other beholds actual life and searches it through and through.

We must be very real, approach our hearers on their own ground and level, and by degrees lift

them up to a higher plane, detach them from their accustomed narrow range of thought and interests, and introduce them to higher regions and purer air. We must throw bridges from the here to the hereafter, make earth and earthly things our starting-point and imperceptibly exchange these for the higher, *i.e.*, heavenly, realities. In no other way shall we be able to achieve anything with this realistic age.

According to our Saviour's own example, we must use the things of daily experience, current events and topics of the day, as parables and symbols of the spiritual life, as steps leading to the Kingdom of Heaven,—from lower to higher, from external to internal experience, from sense and time to eternal interests and verities.

With equal care we must escort our hearers back from these higher regions to the solid ground of daily experience, and show them how to utilise the wisdom from on high, put to the test the powers of the soul, continue to breathe the mountain air of eternity, and attain to everlasting happiness.

If we preach thus, we shall avoid the false impression as if the preaching of Christian truth

were foreign to the world and did not fit in with modern life. Mutual understanding will promote mutual confidence between preacher and hearers. Such sympathetic treatment will win the "lower classes," for they will realise that the preacher is familiar with their domestic affairs and has a definite message for them.

XI

PREACHING SHOULD BE INSTRUCTIVE, BUT NOT DIDACTIC

Our high culture with its intensive system of education, its wealth of pedagogical materials and methods, and its partial over-estimation of intellectual training, did not prevent, nay, may even have contributed to the present generation's inability to think and form correct opinions, its distraction of mind and effeminacy of character. In spite of a well arranged and thorough catechetical training, there is cause to lament ignorance and unclearness not only among the common people, but also among the educated.

It is the first and most sacred duty of every preacher to make the exposition of religious truths as clear and precise and as intelligible as he can. This does not mean that all sermons must be catechetical or that every sermon must strictly follow the course and wording of the catechism. Such a

style of preaching would be objectionable, because unpopular and consequently ineffective.

The greatest friend of modern schooling cannot fail to see how tired people get of school methods. Even among those who have finished their courses, there remains a certain deeply-felt aversion to any reminder of the school room, the school atmosphere, school books, against any attempt to extend schoolmastering beyond its time and place.

The catechism will of course form the doctrinal groundwork of the sermon, but prudence demands that in endeavouring to give a simple, clear, and plain explanation of the truths of religion, the school-room manner and style be carefully avoided. Even with their notorious incapacity to think, at least on spiritual subjects, we must not treat our hearers like school children; for this would only offend them and alienate their sympathies.

We should know how to gauge the intellectual capacity of our hearers. Dogmatic sermons like those of Père Bourdaloue, occupying more than an hour in delivery, with their monumental construction, profound arguments, and strict logical sequence of thought, are no longer possible to-day,

as there are no congregations able and willing to give the close attention and intellectual coöperation which they demand. Therefore, we must confine ourselves to what is essential and necessary; meet difficulties by simple demonstrations; divide hard materials and break them up into sections. The approach should not be one-sided, *i.e.*, to the intellect alone, but include an appeal to the understanding, the imagination, and the emotions.

Here again we should not rashly conclude from the prevalence of ignorance and feeble thinking powers, that we must confine ourselves to the elementary and fundamental doctrines of religion, excluding a more advanced treatment. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews gives us a practical piece of homiletic advice. (Heb. V, 11.) The difficult passage on the high-priestly office of Christ is interrupted by a parenthesis noting both its obvious difficulty and the intellectual state of the readers or hearers, of whom it is said that they had become "dull of hearing," for when they ought to have become teachers by reason of time, they had need that some one teach them "the first elements of the words of God," and had "need of milk, and not of strong meat." One would expect

the conclusion to be: Let us in God's name return to elementary instruction and supply the simple milk of the word of God to such as cannot digest the meat of strong doctrine. But the Apostle's inference is far otherwise, to wit: "Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation of penance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and imposition of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." (Heb. VI, 1 sq.) Then, after this digression and reproof, having spurred the attention of his hearers, the Apostle proceeds with his mysterious and profound instruction.

We, too, again and again have occasion to deal with undeveloped minds, poorly instructed in the elementary truths of religion, and we may be tempted to utter a like reproof (would that it were always worded as delicately and kindly as in the Apostolic letter!); but we should not conclude that it is of no use to advance beyond the propositions of the catechism, and that we must always continue to work at the foundations. Apart from the injustice to such as are more advanced in

thought and might be starved and driven away by such treatment, methods like these fail of their purpose and are didactically unsound. The preacher should strive, after the Apostolic example, to train his hearers to a more perfect and complete understanding, by directing their gaze and opening to them the depth, beauty, and correlation of the truths of Christian revelation, transforming their hearts "into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. III, 18).

A clear exposition of the faith, a lucid presentation of its religious and moral concepts, is more than ever necessary in addressing the upper and lower ranks of present-day society.

As a matter of principle, therefore, we must banish from the pulpit all fantastic and meaningless phrases which by their nebulous nature only tend to increase the mist in which mankind is groping. Let us shun the use of such catch-words of the day as "culture," "progress," "the spirit of the age," "self-determination," and the rest, which are used alternately by unbelievers, agnostics, materialists, pantheists, and modernists, to express or to veil their respective ideas and ten-

dencies. Rather let us more often employ the olden words: "God," "religion," "conscience," "law," "duty," "penance," "sacrifice," "judgment," "eternal life," and so forth.

It is essential to distinguish between clarity of speech and superficiality. The deeper the spring, the clearer the water. We must have grasped a truth in all its depth, if we would make its meaning plain to the common people. "*Duc in altum*" (Luke V, 4) applies also to the preacher. Lack of depth in thought can never issue in clearness of utterance, but produces vagueness and indefiniteness. Never let your preaching suffer from lack of depth! We possess a compass and hence need not fear to traverse the depths of mysticism. A little more of the real mystic element were much to be desired, for despite the present-day tendency to realism, mankind is inclined to, nay, even sometimes haunted by, mysticism.

XII

OUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE DEFENSIVE, BUT NOT CONTROVERSIAL

As light by nature is opposed to darkness, so the Christian sermon cannot avoid conflict with unbelief. For this purpose the preacher must be equipped with weapons of defence and see to it that the faithful are trained in the use of their spiritual armour against attacks upon the faith. Of all duties incumbent on the preacher, this is perhaps the most difficult. There is need of much tact in the use of the right weapons, as well as sound tactics in the conduct of lawful warfare, in order to keep inviolate the peace of God's house and the sanctity of His service. (2 Tim. II, 5.) This warfare must be kept within proper bounds, *i.e.*, restricted to absolute necessity, and confined to such attacks as are felt to be, or are likely to become, dangerous to the welfare of the people.

Let it always be remembered that we are fight-

ing for a cause, not against persons, especially in the case of unbelievers, most of whom deserve pity rather than blame. It should not be necessary to warn the Catholic clergy against denominational strife. Let the pulpit be free from controversial rancor! Let us employ apologetics, and only in rare instances adopt the offensive. Sometimes it may not suffice merely to defend ourselves, but we must stand up boldly as accusers, summoning error and falsehood before the tribunal of truth. We may have to attack the enemy's position, disclose weak points in his arguments, demolish the proud structure of error, and throw light upon the pretended impartiality of his investigations. We must set limits to the pretensions of a science which fancies itself entitled to apply the same methods which it employs in physical research to the solution of the deepest problems of the soul, irrespective of all higher truth and all faith.

It will be our duty to show that unbelief imposes a heavier yoke than the Truth, that it is a veritable *manus mortua,* killing peace and joy and love, and producing no positive results for the good of mankind or the welfare of society. "Let the logical consequences of unbelief be made

manifest. Show the difficulties of a philosophy bereft of all ideals and destitute of supernatural hope. Belief has its difficulties, and it may not always be easy to maintain the standpoint of faith; but it is just as difficult to relinquish faith." (Foerster.)

Let us beware against overestimating the value of intellectual and scholastic methods of exposition and demonstration, which cannot awaken a truly religious life. We must seek not only to convince the intellect, but to win the heart. The modern apologist needs to use persuasion rather than reproof. Nor should a whole sermon ever be devoted to polemics. Controversy is always secondary. The main thing is the exposition of the truth, springing forcibly from deep conviction. Light overcomes darkness simply by shining. The truth carries its own apology in its power of spreading light and life. It is often more effective to defend the faith indirectly than directly. Let the light of Christian doctrine shine forth clearly, and objections and false inferences will vanish.

It was thus that Bossuet in his celebrated "Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique" defended the truth of the Catholic religion against Protestant

attacks, without so much as alluding to the latter. A firm, clear, and living conviction of the truth is the only invulnerable armour against unbelief. For daily use we shall do well to provide the faithful with a handy weapon in the form of brief, decisive, and apt answers to current charges levelled against the Church, so that they need not to be afraid or ashamed, but will always be ready to answer for the hope that is in them and justify themselves in the presence of those who either honestly or dishonestly oppose them.

XIII

MORALITY

The Ethical Culture movement, intent upon conquering the world in one victorious onslaught, set aside Christian morality as of no account. The more experienced and discreet among its champions have considerably modified their claims. One of their leading exponents, A. Forel, admits that while Ethical Culture promoted mental development, it left the heart untouched; whereas "the religions" administered edification and comfort in dark hours. This author seems unaware of the adverse verdict which such an admission implies. A system of ethics that cannot move the heart and has no appeal to the affections, really has no right to exist. Forel can only make the naïve proposal of an "International Order for Ethics and Culture," designed to carry comfort, joy, and warmth into all homes by means of ad-

dresses delivered at weddings, burials, and other such occasions.

Reference to statistics shows that wherever this godless, anti-Christian movement prevails to the exclusion of Christian morality, wherever the old, eternal moral laws and standards have been set aside in theory or practice, the result has been an increase of immorality and every form of licentiousness. The famous biologist H. Driesch admits that "Materialism issues in ethical anarchy." Drews, a pupil of Ed. von Hartmann, confesses that present-day morality rests upon the foundation of a religious conviction not yet completely eradicated, and those who profess a morality without religion are unconsciously depending upon the inherited and acquired moral sense of the masses.

The ethical problem can hardly be taken too seriously by the preacher in our day. It is not a question of revising or reforming the moral law, but of expounding and confirming it, applying it to modern conditions and persuading modern man to obey it. We have to demand obedience to the moral law from a race which suffers from the diseases of licentiousness and moral laxity,—a

race that is being persuaded of its autonomy and taught to regard the moral law as an intolerable and worthless burden.

We have to emphasise the necessity of an ethical authority and the moral significance of obedience to that authority, its right to enforce the law, if need be, by motives of fear and punishment, ideas of death, judgment, and hell. For we cannot admit that modern humanity is so delicately nerved or so ethically mature as to require no reference to law, judgment, and punishment.

"Also in olden times," says Fr. A. M. Weiss, O. P., "men were so cultured or, more correctly, so uncultured as to regard faith as wounding to their pride, and the Decalogue as uncomfortable for wild and sensual nature. If our spirit rises against the yoke of faith, and our nature rebels against the discipline of the Decalogue, this is no sign that we have become more cultured, but rather an incontestable proof that with all our inventions and refinements of living, we remain at heart and essentially the same as men have always been, proud and inclined to evil, *i.e.*, men to whom faith is a necessity and discipline a blessing."

F. W. Foerster is probably right when he says that the claims of obedience need to be expressed in a different and more comprehensible manner to the modern race and that there has been more than enough of cold and formal injunctions, repressive codes, and stern regulations.

The demands of morality must be logically, psychologically, and educatively established, upheld against all contradiction and opposition, as postulates of the Divine Will as well as of human nature and well-being, and their execution left to the human will and conscience. Thus the apparent heteronomy will become a sane and real autonomy, productive of a free and liberating obedience.

The commandments of God and of the Church, instead of being enforced by a sharp "thou shalt," had better be changed into a kindly "you should" or, better still, "we ought." A Roman general, in answer to the question, how he had achieved so many and such brilliant victories, said: "I never said to my soldiers: 'Go!' but always: 'Let us go!' never: 'Work!' but always: 'Let us work!' never: 'Fight!' but: 'Let us fight.'"

It is narrated by Henry Ward Beecher that at the time of the antislavery campaign a Quaker

and a young firebrand happened to be associated on the same mission for the abolition of slavery. They shared the same ideals and made speeches in the same cause. But whereas the Quaker was always heard with respect and sympathy, his partner was greeted with rotten eggs and stones. Complaining of this to his associate, he enquired the reason for such difference in treatment, since they were both advancing the same cause. "I will tell thee, friend," rejoined the Quaker. "Thou sayest: 'if you do thus and thus, you will be damned,' whereas I say: 'Dear friends, if we avoid this course in future, we shall escape damnation.' "

At the present more than at any previous time it is imperative to avoid even the impression that a dull, stupid obedience, a sullen submission suffices, as if independence were proscribed, the will broken, conscience enslaved, and as though the so-called "passive" virtues of abstinence, humility, patience, and submission had supplanted the active virtues of diligence, energy, determination, and force of character.

Dr. Foerster thinks that the chief mistake that has been made in religious instruction is that

we have not entered deeply enough into the meaning of the phrase, "*gratia supponit naturam.*" The tendency has been to build from the roof downwards, instead of from the foundations upwards. If the work of education is to be fruitful, instruction must proceed from the simpler elements to the more advanced and sublime, not vice versa.

In view of the convulsive attempts to introduce a system of purely natural ethics, it is important to clear up the distinction between Christian morality and natural ethics, and to avoid straining the supernatural motive while inculcating moral duties. Both in general and in particular reference must always be made to the fact that there is no antagonism between natural ethics and Christian morality, but they are correlatives one of the other. There is no element or postulate of natural ethics that does not find its expression, fulfilment, and recognition in Catholic moral teaching, and while there is much that is wholesome and stimulating in modern ethics, the goodness is not novel nor is the novelty good.

If in our preaching we had distinguished more clearly the fundamentals and recognised the value of the natural ethical motives of action and ap-

plied their influence when inculcating the Catholic and Christian obligations of self-denial, mortification, Sunday observance, humility, temperance, and the like, we might have been spared the reproach of teaching a morality that is unintelligible and unnatural, effete and antiquated, and at the same time Ethical Culture could not have claimed credit for founding a system that offers something new, much better and more in harmony with nature.

It goes without saying that if the preaching of morality is to penetrate and influence the lives of our people, the preacher must be in touch and fully conversant with the social and moral conditions of his parish, and in the use of this special knowledge must employ tact, discrimination, and prudence.

XIV

PREACHING ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Allusion has already been made to the only possible manner in which social questions can be treated in the pulpit. We must not deal with social matters and questions, domestic economics, wages and social reforms, etc., but preach the saving truths of Christianity and let the light shine upon the vexed social conditions of the time, giving due prominence to the social implications of Christian doctrine and the manner in which, under Christian influence, labour can be ennobled and the labouring classes educated and made free.

A firm insistence on this standpoint will guard against any abuse of the preaching office and against the danger of pandering to Socialism.

Our mission demands that we lay upon the workingman the obligation of the Christian law, and impress upon him the one thing needful, namely, the salvation of his soul. Not by de-

preciating the worker and his labour, but by showing him the true appreciation of toil, even in its most servile form, and insisting on the dignity of labour, shall we exercise our office and give full weight to the authority of our ministry. We must convince the workingman that as a rule he does not over but underestimate his labour, and that its dignity lies not in the physical, but in the higher, spiritual sphere, its reward is not a money wage, but a higher, that is, a spiritual consciousness of duty fulfilled. If we can induce the worker to add "*ora*" to his "*labora,*" and thus bring to the accomplishment of his work a good intention, he may realise that the reward of labour is from above and that work is rendered not merely in the service of man, but directly to God as the highest Master, and it will become evident that both the value of work and its reward do not depend upon others and are not controlled by fortuitous circumstances, but that the measure and degree of satisfaction, liberty, and reward rests entirely upon the individual and his spirited and conscientious endeavour.

There is no stronger protection for the worker against the seduction of Socialism than if we bring

home to him the truth that the Socialist organisations which are ostensibly concerned with the welfare of the workers have a materialistic outlook and lower the value of both work and worker. By such a false and base estimate labour, instead of being ennobled and lightened, is poisoned and embittered by discontent and servility; and by the specious promise of improved conditions and better educational advantages the soul of the worker is starved, and as it were hermetically sealed against the saving influence of religion, the light and life of a higher world.

Everywhere, not only among the industrial classes, must the faithful be instructed and properly directed by preaching the true social doctrines. All questions, including the social question, find their solution in Christ. He is for the whole of society the Redeemer of men. Holy Scripture contains the eternal principles and groundwork of a well-ordered social life. Christianity and the Church are the mightiest of social institutions for all time. The doctrines and moral requirements of the Church, her institutions and means of grace, have a social bearing, and from this point of view too, can be shown to be well founded and

fruitful of blessings. Take, *e.g.*, the dogma of original sin, which offers a complete refutation of, and remedy for, the modern conception of heredity, social environment, solidarity, and social responsibility.

The devotion to the B. V. Mary has an influence upon the social position of women. The Eucharist, divine worship, Sunday observance, the fulfilment of religious duties, the Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony,—all these can and should be regarded and valued from the social standpoint. Whoever sins, or indulges in vice, or neglects his religious duties, or is careless in his work, harms not only himself, but likewise society.

The ministry of preaching can contribute most effectively to the social welfare of mankind: by concerning itself with the sanctity of the marriage bond, the duty of the education of children, the responsibility of parents for their offspring and their servants, and insisting upon proper housing, order, cleanliness, and beauty in the home as essential to the Christian development of family life.

While the social question is best solved in each

family circle, we should awaken the social sense in the whole Christian community. In this connection we do well to recommend our people to become members of societies and organisations formed for religious or charitable purposes, especially such as oppose the evils of licentiousness and intemperance. The duty of each individual in such cases must be determined by local conditions. We must exhort the heads of families to maintain their authority and guard the members of their household (especially the young) against lewd newspapers and books; against immoral works of art; against the abuse of drink; recommend temperance and charity in all things; offer help to those whom either sin has driven to poverty or poverty to sin. It is the fault of many individuals that social evils have grown so threatening, and it is only by the united co-operation of all that these evils can be overcome.

XV

THE CURE OF SOULS

It should always be remembered that while social questions and problems enter into the preacher's theme, his first, last, and highest task is the cure of souls, as far as possible the individual care of individual souls. The preacher must not be a gramophone of Christian doctrine or a kind of talking volume. The impression he makes must not be indefinite, but definite and personal. A sermon must be like the intercourse of soul with soul, personal and intimate, with only one object in view,—the salvation of the soul, the spiritual instruction and upbuilding of each person. It is precisely at this point that the office of preaching comes in touch with personality and individual consciousness, if these expressions be used not as catch phrases but as denoting the earnest endeavour to work at and upon the soul regarded in its separate individuality.

The use of high-sounding phrases and modern catch-words is to be avoided in the pulpit; it suffices to know the direction of the current of thought and to use it to shape the true course.

It has been truly said that the cult of personality includes a striving to attain greatness, liberty, and power as forming the sources of personal worth. To attain superiority, freedom, and power is an impulse that has seized the soul of the people, and especially of the young.

These tendencies in themselves are perfectly legitimate, but liable to be misdirected and abused by irreligious and materialistic influences, by the false contention that religion, Christianity, the faith, the Church, regard the assumption of this independence and dominance of personality as detrimental and necessarily hostile to the Christian spirit. It is our duty to clear up the misconception and to convert an opposing tendency into an ally. We can aid our own cause and provide a new avenue of approach to modern humanity. From the natural striving to assert itself we may lead the human soul to realise that the pursuit of personality and self-determination is wrong, not because it seeks to raise itself too highly, but rather

because its aim is too low and material, and is not pursued with sufficient energy and consistency.

We need to make men realise that it is precisely Christianity and the Church who, by teaching eternal truth, communion with God, and fellowship with Christ, by introducing spiritual thoughts and motives into the affairs of daily life, can alone enable the soul to attain true greatness and self-expression. Church doctrine and ecclesiastical authority are words that sound like the clanking of chains and fetters in the ears of modern men and by which they feel themselves instinctively repelled. Let us, therefore, not only propose faith as a stern duty, but also as a royal privilege, a great blessing and high spiritual good, and demonstrate that it is the way to attain true greatness of spirit and does not lower the standard of intellectual and social life, but elevates it.

We will surely not blunt the categorical imperative of God's commandments and the Church's precepts, but we will be careful that its sharp edge will not wound the tender consciences of our weak brethren. We will preach obedience, but in the language of liberty. The oft-repeated assertion that religious obedience conflicts with

personal development should be shown to rest upon a false conception of the meaning of personal responsibility. True freedom and real growth of personality are inseparably allied with, and based upon, the acknowledgment of a permanent authority, whereas lawless individualism can only lead to a self-determination that is fatal to the soul's true aim and destiny.

Let obedience be preached in the language of liberty. There is no need to make the divine commandments appear like threats or to muster them like an army of policemen or constables: rather let us introduce them as friendly and beneficent guides and guardian angels. In the seemingly stern "Thou shalt!" let us sound the note of love: for it is love that has dictated the commandments, and love is their purpose and object: "*Finis precepti est caritas de corde puro, et conscientia bona et fide non ficta.*" (1 Tim. I, 5.)

In the name of liberty, in the spirit of charity and of self-love we will demand obedience to the eternal laws of God and His Church and show that these barriers exist only for the purpose of securing the way to true liberty and protecting men from the abject slavery which threatens all who

refuse to obey God and man, and chase false liberty along the path of sin and vice. This craving for self-assertion and self-determination is, especially in youth, an urge to acquire fame, to pose as a super-man. Our duty is to indicate the right road to self-mastery and to show that only by self-conquest and self-denial shall we arrive at self-possession, *i.e.*, possession of our own soul.

In order to overcome external hindrances and difficulties we must realise that to serve is the first step towards dominion, and to exalt oneself is to lower oneself, whereas to humble oneself is the way to true exaltation and spiritual influence. "*Deo servire regnare est.*" "Whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister; and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant." (Matt. XX, 26 sq.)

The care of one's own soul and the souls of others, the desire and training for personality is for us centred in one *person.* Our salvation is personal; Christianity is personal; the Church is a person; the Christian ideal of personality is personal; it is an actual, historic, living personality—*the Godman Jesus Christ.* Nor is the ideal only exhibited in Him, but the strength and grace

to attain it flow from Him. Therefore, everything is ultimately reduced to a personal equation. The one thing needful is personal adherence to and living communion with this one Theandric Person, true union with Him, founded on faith, effected by the Sacraments, sealed and constantly nourished by the Holy Eucharist. All moral duties concur in *one:* union with Christ and imitation of Christ. The whole teaching of the Church aims at nothing else but the restoration, confirmation, and consolidation of this living union of the soul with Christ. If the Church at the present time lays special emphasis upon the cult of the Holy Eucharist, devotion to the Sacred Heart, frequent communion, these are not to be regarded merely as pious fashions or fads, as superficial critics have asserted, but rather as thoughtfully devised means of education calculated to maintain a vital, ardent union between her children and Christ.

To make His Person the pivot of all morality and the central point of the plan of salvation, of the life of the community, and of each single member thereof, the source from which all life is regulated; to employ all possible means to establish communion with Him,—this is the duty and

the problem of preaching, more urgent now than ever before, since the ghost of the super-man is stalking abroad, a super-man who is half angel, half man, half man, half God, and neither the one nor the other. It has been pointed out that Nietzsche merely gave him his name, but did not invent him. The super-man is the product of the human heart, the dream embodiment of a being higher, more powerful, nobler and happier than ordinary man.

The problem exists and men are busy solving it. They pursue this phantom either in honest forward endeavour or in fantastic flights of the imagination, or the decadent trend of a brutal egotism, or along the diabolic tracks of blasphemy and godlessness. The problem can be solved in principle and for each particular man only by Christianity. The only true Super-man is Jesus Christ, the God and Man. It is solely by communion with Him that man can attain to his full stature and obtain complete control of his soul. "I in the Father, you in me, and I in you," is the solution of the problem.

If in preaching morality we make this our object, our sermons will be both timely and in-

teresting. It has been truly said that the present age earnestly desires a religion that will enable the soul to reach the full height of its development and reveal to man all the treasures of his innermost being and put forth all spiritual energy unto perfection. Such a religion need not be sought for or created,—it is ready to hand. In the Church individualism and Socialism are reconciled and fused as perfectly as is possible on earth. By proving that Christianity offers to men a religion that satisfies their deepest longings, we shall confirm in our hearers their conviction of the Christian truth and preserve them from such errors as that of the super-man and super-personality.

XVI

PREACHING CONSOLATION

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her evil [warfare, toil] is come to an end." (Is. XL, 1 sq.) These words are applicable also to the preachers of the New Covenant, more so to-day than ever before. Mankind is in need of comfort. Whether the burden of life is heavier to-day than in former times may be open to question; but undoubtedly the human power of endurance has diminished and there is evidence of lassitude and weariness on all sides. Distress of soul, dissatisfaction, interior emptiness, ill-humoured aversion, distaste and surfeit of life have perhaps never reached such a pitch nor been so widely prevalent since the decline of the Græco-Roman Empire, as they are now. The burden of sin and guilt and suffering is weighing heavily upon all mankind, and despite its brilliant exter-

ior, modern civilisation bears the impress of deep sorrow.

Heartless should we be if at such a time we gave no heed to the cry ringing in our ears: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." In the Apostolic enumeration of the threefold aim of preaching: *ad aedificationem et exhortationem et consolationem* (1 Cor. XIV, 3), the third point now has special significance. We should indeed mistake the signs of the times if we failed to see that nothing would be more unwise than to preach gloomy sermons or indulge in threats and terrors and pessimistic views, for by our personal discontent we may make the truth unpalatable.

Sympathy and charity demand that we should not belittle, much less treat with scorn, the burden of sorrow and trouble that rests upon mankind, but, on the contrary, set ourselves to help and uplift, to heal and to comfort. Nor should we disregard the fact that for our work of sowing the seed of the word of God there is no more favourable soil than that which has been harrowed by the sharp ploughshare of sorrow and misery. The most grateful and faithful among our hearers will always be those who belong to the secret

brotherhood of sufferers and mourners. A further reason for regarding sorrow as an ally in our work is that it is quick to destroy pride and unbelief by exposing their impotence.

Of course, this ministry of consolation is not to be exercised by weakening or minimising the solemn and moving truths of Christian revelation: they, too, have their medicinal value in healing the wounds of the soul. In this respect the saying is apt that "a timid surgeon inflames the wound." Nor would it avail to dwell upon pathetic scenes and mournful incidents, and show a preference for sad and tearful subjects.

This would only increase the trouble. A mournful and depressed temperament is too much inclined to focus upon one dark spot.

It is of primary importance in dealing with this as with other subjects, to give a regular, clear, and sympathetic exposition of the eternal truths. This will act like sunlight and warmth upon the sore and depressed feelings, resulting in a spiritual awakening and interior tranquillity and contentment. This will mean making full use of the refreshing, comforting, and uplifting resources of Christian doctrine and institutions, and apply-

ing them with tender skill to the wounded soul. Some of these wounds are caused by sin, and sinful habits, and as in physical treatment the use of the surgeon's knife may be necessary, so in spiritual diagnosis it may be necessary to probe these wounds and keep them open so that the deep rooted evil may be more thoroughly eradicated.

Ph. Wackernagel wrote in 1849: "It is a duty in our days to remember our poor people in all that we do. For a generation it has been the constant endeavour of those who would lead them astray, to compass their purpose by destroying their sacred inheritance, estranging their affections, their pious reverence for all their forefathers had bequeathed them, and thus robbing them of truth and the essential blessings of life. Hence it becomes us in these hard times, whether we pray or work, at home or abroad, to labour for the people. God forbid that they should suffer extinction; God help them in their deep disgrace and remove the evil and destruction that threaten to destroy them."

How much more now does the condition of the masses appeal to our sympathy and goodwill! The pastor needs some of the Apostolic *"tristitia magna et continuus dolor cordis"* in the cure of

souls (Rom. IX, 2). With deep sympathy and understanding let him enter into the conditions, dangers, temptations, and daily needs of his flock and thus find a way into their hearts.

XVII

OUR OWN, OUR BEST

The divine vocation to the ministry of preaching, which is not comparable to anything else on earth, demands for the administration of this office great personal devotion, and how much more insistently in the critical circumstances of our own times! Preaching, and every single sermon, cannot be taken too seriously. A sermon to-day may mean for the Kingdom of God, for the parish, for a single soul, either a lost battle or a victory won. Every effort must be made to offer in each single sermon our very own and our very best. Though the truth which we have to proclaim is not of us, we must not merely utter it, as if we were phonographs, but witness to the eternal truth personally, from innermost conviction; having made the truth our own, we must preach it as our own personal conviction. To give of our own does not, of course, exclude the adoption and use of the work of

others, of ancient and modern homiletic literature. He who is always expending and producing without receiving and gathering, speedily becomes bankrupt in ideas—a spent preacher, boring his hearers with repetitions and tautologies. If we have to preach year after year, we must have a well-stored treasure house from which to bring forth *"nova et vetera"* (Matt. XIII, 52). If we know how to make use of it, not merely our special study subject, *i. e.,* homiletics, but every kind of study and reading and actual daily experience and observation of life and our parochial visits can contribute to this result. But the sermon should not be a patchwork of little original and much borrowed matter. All that we collect and adopt must be perfectly assimilated and made our own before we offer it to others.

A sermon must not be a mere intellectual and memory feat. Even the best intellectual and logical statement of Christian truth, no matter how clear and orderly, is not a sermon; at least not one which will awaken or communicate life. Less intellectualism and more of the immortal soul in the interpretation of the eternal truths would result in the decline and disappearance of modern errors.

The preacher is the intermediary through whom God speaks to His people. Therefore his person and all the powers of his soul must be at God's service. It is a secondary consideration what talents he may possess; the main thing is that he enter into his office with his whole heart and soul, and place himself with all his gifts and powers at the disposal of the Divine Will.

Note that a sermon is essentially different from any kind of profane or secular speech. The realm of mysticism is the true sphere and home of the preacher. Preaching has been placed in some kind of comparison with the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist. Preaching is in a sense an incarnation of the Word of God. The divine element in preaching is the eternal Truth, and the sacred commission to proclaim it; the human element is the person of the preacher expressing his innermost being, putting his heart and soul into this work. The fusion of these two elements, the divine and the human, is a mystical process that can take place only in the depths of the soul. The soul receives the eternal truth, embraces it by interior perception, experience, and practice, clothes it as with a body of flesh and blood in human thoughts,

feelings and words, and thus there is born from out of the depths of the soul's travail and joy the incarnate word of God, the Christian sermon.

We know that this mysterious operation can be accomplished only in the stillness of retirement and meditation. Meditation is the first and most essential homiletic factor, the central source of light and power in preaching. To enter into oneself is the first and most necessary part of the preparation for each sermon. *"Verbi Dei inanis est forinsecus prædicator, qui non est intus auditor,"* says St. Augustine (*Serm.* 179, 4). First hearer and then teacher. *"Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus."* (1 Kings III, 10.) By this prayer the soul is placed in contact with the Holy Ghost, listens to the voice from Heaven, allows supernatural truth to radiate her whole being with light and warmth. In such wise the soul of the preacher is absorbed in the contemplation of Christian doctrine, is confirmed in the conviction of its truth, makes individual application of its influence in and upon daily life, and draws conclusive inferences for direction and guidance both in resolve and practice. The preacher who has thus had personal experience in the practice of the

truth, has gained the power to bear witness to the truth, and to convince others of its power and influence in life and conduct.

This inward self-retreat and contemplation constitutes the chief preparation for preaching. In this preparatory conference with the Divine Logos in the innermost sanctuary of his soul the preacher receives his mandate, his instructions and his mission for each separate sermon; confers with his Divine Councillor concerning the contents, purpose, and aim of the message, and himself becomes fully conscious of the truth, light, and blessing with which the doctrine is charged, which is committed to him to deliver, and rejoices to translate it into terms of daily life and action.

But, however important and valuable the practice of meditation, the work of preparation must not be confined to this. There must follow the complete elaboration of the subject, which involves strenuous exercise of the mind and due observance of the rules of homiletics.

Here again we must give of our own and of our best. The work of others may be made use of, but it must be thoroughly assimilated and made our own. This usually means effort and hard toil.

The preacher resembles the Alpine climber, whose goal appears easier to reach and nearer than in reality it is. The higher he climbs, the farther his object seems to recede, and that which appeared easy and simple proves in reality to be set about with difficulties and obstacles. So the preacher in his preparation must proceed step by step, sentence by sentence, laboriously and patiently mounting upwards, if he would not only himself attain to the eternal heights, but lead his hearers out of the depths of daily routine unto the mountain of God.

It is nothing to be ashamed of, nor is it a bad sign, if the work of preparing a sermon demands time and toil. Each and every sermon is worth just so much as it has taken trouble and labour to prepare it. Should it seem year after year that this work becomes not lighter but harder, that need be no sign of declining capacity; quite the contrary, it may indicate a growing thoroughness and conscientiousness, greater depth of thought and more exacting demands of the preacher on himself.

In his work of preparation the preacher has been compared to one who labours in a mine or in a mint, or to a husbandman tilling the land; but

in any case the result must not be to offer on Sunday to his hearers rough clods or ears of corn in the stalk,—much less straw,—but pure bread. Useful comparisons will serve to show that the finished product, the sermon, is the outcome of a combination of spiritual functions.

It is not necessary to enter into details, but it should suffice to repeat and emphasise the rules of homiletics and refer to approved authors. There must be co-operation of the will, the understanding, and the feeling in the plan, sequence, and expression of thought. The will directs not only the operation of preaching, but also helps to influence the hearers. The first appeal is to the understanding. But the aim of preaching is not a purely intellectual, nor even spiritual enjoyment, but to form salutary resolutions. A sermon is not intended to be sweet music, but a clear, strong call to work and combat. The hearer is not being taken for a walk, but led to a definite, practical goal and decision: the sermon is unto edification.

What do I purpose to accomplish by this sermon? How can I accomplish it? With these two questions we must begin our preparation. Every

sermon principally involves an act of the will, while the intellect and the affections are in close co-operation. Under the directing counsel of reason the will outlines the plan, lays the foundation, provides for solid construction. The main aim is constructive, not decorative. Strength and energy are the first essentials; ornament and beauty are secondary, and admissible only in so far as they contribute to the attainment of the main purpose. But the utmost endeavour should be made by conclusive concentration of ideas and tense objective progress of thought, by order and sequence of sentence and clause, to give effect to this purpose and energy. Preaching with energy and to a purpose does not mean a noisy blustering, which is as unbecoming to the pulpit as it is unsuitable to the message of eternal truth. Nor must there be wanting tender appeals to the heart, couched in calm and persuasive language, to constrain the hearers to listen and to influence their wills. A speaker can impose his will only indirectly upon his audience: it needs both intellect and emotion, as intermediaries, to effect this result. If a sermon is to have power, its style must be forcible, not rough, but polished and perfected as a delicate

instrument for divine use and service. All platitudes and empty conventionalities and soft phrases must be rigorously excluded. A study and mastery of the rules of rhetoric and homiletics will contribute to inspire the preacher's message with power and real eloquence.

In proportion to the time spent and the pains taken, to the measure of inspiration sought in prayer and meditation, to the preacher's love of God and man, will be the influence and effect of his sermons.

XVIII

PURITY OF INTENTION

WHILE giving of his own and of his best, the preacher must be careful to divest himself and his utterance of all egotism and self-seeking. He must rigorously avoid any and every selfish motive in his homiletic studies and sermons, and let his purpose always be God and Christ. This demand transcends the field of homiletics and includes the whole personality of the preacher and his life-work. It is for this reason that special emphasis is laid upon the fundamental law of ascetics, *viz.*, purity of intention, which is also an essential rule of homiletics, as upon its observance depend the vitality, value, and success of preaching.

As in the artistic sphere, so in public speaking, there is constant danger of the corrupting influence of vanity. Temporarily vanity may act as a spur to lawful ambition, but it can never really

be a benefit or serve a useful purpose. Its tendency is to compromise the preacher. "Anyone," says Nietzsche, "who wants to show that he has spirit, lets it be apparent that he has abundance of its opposite." Bismarck is credited with saying: "Vanity is like a mortgage on real estate: it depreciates its value." Nothing can less endure such depreciation and deprivation than the office and ministry of preaching.

That which might ordinarily be regarded as a pardonable weakness, and condoned with a smile of pity, if consciously and willingly admitted into the pulpit becomes criminal—a crime for which the Apostle coined the strong expression: "*adulterare verbum Dei.*" (2 Cor. II, 17; IV, 2; V, 20.) The expression is not too strong. To allow vainglory and egotism to disturb and desecrate the official, sacred, and mystical relations between God and the souls of the preacher and his hearers, can only be described as immoral. It contains a contradiction in terms, a dissonance which must eventually strike and offend the people. How piteous and despicable is the attitude of a man who comes as a prophet with supernatural authority, and poses before the people like a strut-

ting peacock; who, instead of distributing the bread of life and the wine of truth, makes a display of vain phrases and oratorical tricks!

Such contemptible frivolity must have the worst consequences,—damaging the authority of the preacher and making him a laughing stock; for however much he may think to disguise his low motives, they will betray him in action and mien. The presence of pride will effectually seal up the sources which flow from the heart and soul, or pollute them. Pride and arrogance cannot expect the aid of the Holy Ghost. The sacred office, if thus abused, becomes a torture, for vanity and ambition are never satisfied. Praise and congratulation will not quench a burning conscience, which is the lot of the ambitious and vain priest.

Purity of intention, therefore, is an ascetic as well as a homiletic demand especially necessary at the present time, when there are enemies in plenty who oppose the authority of the preacher and threaten to mar his work. Let us be reminded of our Lord's words: "How can ye believe" [besides instructing and confirming others in the faith] "who receive honour one of another and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

(Jno. V, 44.) Commenting upon this passage, a liberal Protestant minister pronounces the following verdict: "If only we were thoroughly aware of the danger and harm to ourselves that results from pride and self-seeking in our service in the Kingdom of God, and realise how contemptible we appear! Self-complacency grievously harms the great cause of God. It is as if, while labouring in God's vineyard, we suddenly fell into a hidden pit and our eyes lost the wide circuit of vision and our limbs the power of movement, and we were rendered helpless. Any man who has ostensibly consecrated his life to the honour of God and the salvation of his fellowmen, and who tries to win some small honour and advantage for himself the while, is like a fireman who, while on the fire escape with one whom he has rescued from death, would ask him for a gratuity."

Those who are entrusted with the ministry of preaching must earnestly strive to keep their intention pure from selfish motives. The means to this end are well known. First and above all there is prayer, which restores and maintains the normal relationship between the preacher and God; especially prayer for his people, which places him

in the right relationship with them. Another Protestant quotation: "The art of preaching well is not learnt in the academies, but on one's knees."

Nothing must divert our attention from, or belittle our estimate of, the dignity of our office: neither our own insufficiency, nor the inattention and disobedience of those to whom we preach, nor weariness, nor the arduous work of preparation, nor any other thing or person must ever lead us to forget our high calling.

It will not suffice to rid our intention of self in a general way. A pure intention and self-abnegation must accompany all the preparatory stages—the elaboration, memorising, address, as well as the actual delivery of each sermon. Vanity seeks an entry everywhere, and, though excluded from the body of the sermon as a whole, may yet lurk in the turns of a sentence, and it needs great care to root out the evil; nor must one rest until with a clear conscience he can say of the whole of his sermon that it is *"lucidum totum, non habens aliquam partem tenebrarum"* (Luke XI, 36). On the way to the pulpit let both soul and voice be well attuned, let self be left behind, and the good

intention repeated. Like Moses, we should reflect the divine glory in our countenance and stand before men with that unselfish objective authority which never fails to impress others and to advantage the cause.

In our homiletic work our only object must ever be to please God, not ourselves or the people. *"Valde stulto homini placet, qui sibi placet,"* says St. Augustine. We must not seek to please our hearers, but rather to do them good, to save their souls. To seek to please God is our plain duty, for we are His ambassadors. St. Chrysostom says that the preacher should work out his sermons so as to be acceptable to God, and not seek the applause of men; this should be his sufficient compensation that he has sought to please God. (*De Sacerd.*, l. V, c. 7.)

Having set our will in this direction, we can say with the Apostle: *"Nos sensum Christi habemus"* (1 Cor. II, 16), and feel within us a life-giving force that imparts joy to our work and the assurance that it is not in vain. The word is fulfilled: *"Qui manet in me et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum"* (Jno. XV, 5); and this fruit is

above all to the preacher's own benefit. His pure intention lifts him up above himself, doubles his powers, neutralises his defects, imparts superhuman endurance, and preserves the fresh vigor of youth; it bestows a clear vision (*"oculus simplex"*; Matt. VI, 22), so that he can read the souls of his flock and discover what is lacking, and the best means to reach the heart of the people. Purity of intention imparts the sense of tact and a seasoned simplicity to his homiletic exposition. It serves a further purpose by curing fever, timidity, self-consciousness and embarrassment, which hamper so many preachers. Granted that, in view of the greatness and responsibility of his task, a certain fear and dread may count to the preacher's honour and is certainly to be preferred to an over-bold assurance, shyness can become chronic, unnerve the preacher and impede his office; it may also be that the real cause of shyness is not always excusable, not altogether without an admixture of pride and self-consciousness, showing an absence of the essential purity of intention. Therefore it behoves us to concentrate our will and thought upon the

honour and glory of God and the salvation of souls, to deflect them from self, and thus to gain objectivity, independence, and ease in our public ministry.

XIX

HOMILETIC FORM

Not only in the arts, but also in the sphere of oratory there is an evident tendency to adopt a new style, characterised by a feverish desire for novelty, a corresponding distaste for ancient tradition and the classics, and a certain impatience of æsthetic standards and laws of expression. As a result of this tendency we have in literature a kind of anarchy: syntax runs wild; there is a wealth of new, uncanny and unheard of words and phrases; a kind of explosive style of sentences without predicates, supposed to produce the effect of originality and overflowing wit. There is something to be said for the modern movement. It is free from a good deal of the old-fashioned verbiage, and while extravagance is mainly confined to journalism and belles lettres, there has been a return to simplicity and nature in the *genus dicendi.* A good deal of conventionality, of affected

mannerism has disappeared, and there are signs of brevity and clear, concise, vigorous, and adequate thought-expression. In view of these tendencies, it would be reprehensible if the sermon style were to model itself on that of journalism or the popular novel. Apart from wronging the word of God, such a course would be retrograde. The world is tired of this phraseology, and desires nothing less than an impressionist style in the pulpit. The strength of the preacher is not in imitating modern forms of expression, but in endeavouring to proclaim the truth simply and forcibly. If he does this, he will find a grateful audience both among the educated and the unlettered.

This does not, of course, imply indifference or carelessness to the forms of speech. Style is of greater importance to-day than ever before, because people read more than ever before. In recommending a natural style we do not mean crude and unpolished utterance, but natural nobility and spirituality of expression. This will demand considerable mental labour and a strict self-censorship; for style is the expression of character. Thought and its formal expression in speech

are related as soul to body. As the soul builds up and informs the body, so thought finds expression in speech. For the word is to the thought even as the body is to the soul, be it help or hindrance. The thought discovers itself in the process of self-expression, and develops meaning and force in the endeavour to clothe it in fresh form; and much labour and trouble is involved in the process. A natural, clear, and flowing style is not easily achieved, and the best effect will disguise the struggle to produce it.

There is nothing like genuine dissatisfaction with oneself to give the spur to an indefatigable quest for perfection. The greatest masters of style all had to traverse the same difficult road. St. Augustine says: "Nearly always my speech displeases me, for I long for what is better and frequently arrive at an inward satisfaction before I have begun to express it in words. If I am unable to express adequately what I know, it grieves me that my tongue does not answer to the impulse of my heart; but I am aware that I do not make my hearers wholly cognizant of the knowledge that I possess: I am conscious that I do not express myself so as to bring that about. This failure is

attributable to the fact that the apprehension of knowledge—this enlightenment of the soul—is like a lightning flash; whereas speech in its slow extension and gradual expression is altogether different; so that while it turns and twists itself in the effort to find expression, the quick perception of thought has hidden itself again in the mysterious deep." (*De Cat. Rud.*, c. 2, n. 3).

In acquiring a good style we must make liberal use of the waste-paper basket. It has been quite truly said that the waste-paper basket alone knows the genesis of a classical style, because it has received the caul, as it were, of classical origins. To many nowadays it seems old-fashioned and unnecessary to make sermon sketches. They imagine that it hinders the spontaneous flow of speech and damages originality. But the prevalent decadence and decline of literary style is largely due to the unfounded estimation in which the raw products of the mind are held. The preacher should allow the waste-basket its place nor be sparing in making notes and sketches; they are a blessing. Even as waste paper they make clearance of long-winded sermons, and en-

hance the force and worth and excellence of the discourse.

There are two concrete questions that must be put: How does the sermon stand towards (a) rhetoric and (b) pathos? Both are undeniably held in low regard, if not in bad repute, by modern audiences. The art of rhetoric and the use of pathos are associated with unreality, exaggeration, artificiality and the realistic modern man regards them with suspicion, nay disgust. Would the sermon fare better by abstaining from the use of these methods?

Rhetoric, once a queen among the sciences and arts, to whom the master minds of old paid willing homage, has latterly fallen into discredit. Modern notions of rhetoric are mostly based upon a total misapprehension of its character and purpose. The generally accepted idea of rhetoric as consisting of a system of technicalities and rules invented by rhetoricians, or a dry collection of phrases and figures of speech, is mistaken. It may be that, in ancient as well as in modern times, the science of rhetoric has lent itself to the appearance of being a self-invented secret art, instead

of exhibiting and illustrating its rules and methods in their derivation from nature. From the beginning the natural gift of human speech, in order to express feelings and conditions and motives in public speech addressed to large audiences, has evolved and developed a method adequate to enliven, accentuate, and enforce the effects of speaking. The purpose of rhetoric is to exploit this means of natural intercourse, to reduce its expression to rule and order, and to school it to correct uses. Far from being opposed to, rhetoric is derived from, nature and serves the truth in speech. It would not be fitting in a speech before a great assembly, on subjects of the highest and utmost importance, to adopt the style of every-day conversation, or of an ordinary transaction, or the essay-form. This also applies to preaching, and there would seem to be no reason why a knowledge of rhetoric should not assist the preacher in moulding his diction upon the model of the old masters. To dispense altogether with the use of this science in our preaching might promote the tendency to become more and more academic, cold, formal and monotonous, and deprive our speech of animation, beauty, and communica-

tive force. All depends of course upon the right use being made of this aid, and the avoidance of artificiality and exaggeration.

Remarks similar to the foregoing apply also to the use of pathos, which in modern times has come to be discredited as a factor in public speaking. It may not strictly belong to homiletic form, since the influence of pathos affects more or less the whole body of a speech or sermon, but it lends its own impressive colouring to what is said, and we cannot wholly dispense with it. To underestimate the use of pathos and look askance at the poets and writers who employ it, is as much a sign of decadence as its overestimation in former centuries. It does not indicate special enlightenment and superior culture; but is rather indicative of surfeit and unreality and overfastidiousness,—a result of an overdeveloped intellect and underdeveloped feelings. It would be a mistake to rule out pathos in preaching. A sermon is not directed solely to man's reasoning faculties, but to his whole being. The appeal may primarily be to the intellect in order to reach the will, but between these and the indispensable intermediaries are the feelings, which are affected by pathos. Moreover

such human sensations as apathy and antipathy, which may arise in the hearts of a congregation to mar the effect of a sermon, are precisely the moods that the preacher should seek to influence, and in this endeavour he may rely on the rightly used pathos. But far better no pathos than bathos, for affection is not to affect affectation or unreality. To sound a false note is to deaden genuine feeling and to reverse the effect which it was intended to produce.

The appeal to the affections can only proceed from true and genuine affection realised in the preacher's inner self, on fire with love, illumined by the light of eternal truth, glowing in the heart and spoken word. The ancient maxim obtains: "*Summa circa movendos affectus in hoc posita est ut moveamur ipsi.*" Quintilian says that only fire can kindle fire, only dampness can make damp, and nothing can impart a colour which it does not itself possess.

There are two kinds of pathos:—indirect or virtual, and direct or formal. The former works upon the hearers' feelings by such allusions and modulations and suggestions as tend to produce a sympathetic vibration of the sensitive cords of

emotion. In direct pathos the speaker reveals his own feelings in order to awaken kindred emotions in his hearers. The former is to be preferred for several reasons: it is less likely to arouse suspicion; it more adequately serves the purpose of preaching, which is to win over the will and incline it to act; the preacher's personality is kept in the background, while the listeners are affected by the subject rather than by the man, and are unconsciously moved to a corresponding sympathy of emotion without enquiring how it was evoked.

If the direct method is to be employed (allowance being made for exceptional cases) it should be introduced and prepared for by the use of indirect pathos, in order to avoid the sudden transition from cold reasoning to an emotional appeal. Such sudden changes of temperament and temperature are likely to produce chills. Sudden Oh's and Ah's are likely to provoke the obstinate retort: "Not just yet!" Excepting perhaps on great festal occasions, it is never advisable to open a sermon with direct pathos, as this endangers its warmth if it be not immediately translated into energy and practical response on the part of the hearers. There must be no lingering or delay in using

pathos. To dwell too long upon this note is to jeopardise the whole effect and to break all the rules of sound homiletics. Cicero has some scorching remarks on such a mistaken course: "If an animated speaker has a talent only for pathos, and spends all his force upon this means alone, without moderating the fire of his speech by instructive passages in a simple, clear style, and interspersing interesting and attractive elements, he will only succeed in making himself ridiculous. To accomplish his purpose in simple instructive representation requires insight and intelligence. Even he who aspires only to please and attract will win some applause in speaking; but one whose speech is exclusively pathetic, gives the impression of not being right in the head. If a man be not able to discourse on a subject moderately and calmly, with definite order and distinction, but must needs become fire and flame without warning to his listeners, he behaves like a madman among sane men, or like a drunken man in the midst of temperate men." (Orator, c. 28–29.)

Allowance must, of course, be made for differences in temperament and talent. Affections and the art of moving them vary individually; but the

total absence of pathos means a great loss to a preacher. True pathos issuing from the depths of the soul works with a wonderful and subtle powe from heart to heart.

Holy Scripture is the best school of homiletic form, and from its pages we can acquire a noble, popular, powerful style, and deep and genuine pathos.

XX

DELIVERY

THE Director of the Viennese Burg-Theater, Alfred von Berger, in an article in the "Oesterreichische Rundschau" of Nov. 1909, bitterly complains of "the decline in the art of speaking." He says it is incredible how poorly even first-class actors manage their voices; what little originality they exhibit in creating new forms of expression; how seldom they succeed in accompanying the prominent emphasis by intelligent under-tones and half-tones of expression, so as to give vent to the hidden depths of the soul. Modern stage players seem to have lost the art of conveying more than the actual words express: their utterance is prosaic, and they only utter sounds, not noble human speech, and give the impression of stony coldness. Does not this criticism apply also to pulpit delivery? To the thrice repeated question: What is the most important thing for a speaker?

Demosthenes gave the thrice repeated answer: "Delivery." This does not imply that subject matter and form are secondary, what he means is that without good delivery the best subject and form are of small account, and a poor delivery can destroy the effects of the most carefully prepared speech. Therefore this last act in the process of oratory: —the enunciation, the transposition of the tones and pitch of words—is not of secondary, but of primary importance. The subject matter of the speech and the personality of the speaker may compensate for inadequate delivery, and a congregation may at last become accustomed to the defect: but it remains an incalculable loss; whereas a good delivery is a powerful asset. At the present day it behoves us more than ever to employ an effective delivery and put it to the fullest use.

Let us pay greater respect to the majesty of the word, especially to the majesty of the word of God! How mysterious and powerful is the publicly spoken word! It is not merely the breath of the mouth, but the breath of the spirit, vibrating from soul to soul, awakening thought, moving the affections, rousing the will to dare and do. Over and above there is the inspiration of the Divine

Spirit. It depends very much on the preacher that the word lose not its power and effect and become discordant and unpleasant through defective pronunciation; that it lose not its richness and tone by impaired articulation or forfeit its meaning by false emphasis, or become a lullaby by a monotonous, sing-song delivery. Let respect be paid to the majesty of God's word. Such respect pledges us to hard work and constant practice.

It will not do to allege that intelligence and common sense can dispense with art. If to the question of delivery be brought the influence of an intelligent and sensible interest, there may be need of nothing more than study and practice. It will not do to consider the art of delivery as something which one man has and another has not. There are diversities of gifts: but even talent needs developing and cultivating, and mediocrity may be informed and enriched by care and practice. Artistic perfection is not required in the delivery of a sermon, but the preacher should at least be free from mistakes and blemishes in his speech. Not to pay attention to this is a foolish neglect of duty. No sensible man should be indifferent to the effect of his speech: whether he be intelligible and sym-

pathetic with his audience, or cause them ear-ache and nerve strain by his insufferable shouting and bellowing: whether the congregation can follow the sermon easily, or whether in consequence of too rapid and low speaking only half be heard and the rest not understood, and the whole robbed of its effect:—surely no sane man can be indifferent to these things! There would appear to be a peculiar kind of deafness prevalent among not a few of our preachers: they seem not to hear themselves speak, and to have lost the ability of controlling their utterance. The first rule is: *Listen to thyself:* be thine own audience, thine own keen and merciless critic. Sharpen the sense of hearing by the help of others; be grateful to friend and foe, who will point out mistakes and draw attention to defects of enunciation or delivery.

The second rule is: *Learn to speak.* Correct speech includes clear vocalisation—important, because on this depends the euphony, the music of speech,—accurate pronunciation, especially of consonants, which form as it were the scaffolding of speech; right articulation, no swallowing of syllables and final sentences, nor clipping of words and particles; clear accentuation, which

facilitates comprehension; the use of right pauses and breaks, which are as necessary for taking breath in speaking as in understanding.

The third rule is: *Learn to speak truly and naturally.* That is all that is really necessary in sermon delivery. Each sentence and phrase must be pronounced so that it answers to its content and meaning, either in quiet narration or vivid description, in pathetic or encouraging or energetic tone, "piano" or "forte," as the content or meaning demands. Generally speaking the delivery should resemble an elevated and elevating conversation; for a sermon is not an academic speech or monologue, but a direct address; therefore the tone should be conversational and natural, though elevated, because of the size of the auditorium and the audience, as well as the high and holy purpose and the subject matter. If this be borne in mind, the style of delivery will of itself become vivid and acceptable. The human voice is a wonderful instrument for this purpose. It resembles a great organ. He who is master of this instrument and can play it well, knowing how to use and combine dark and light, low and high, loud and soft

changes in stops and manuals, can speak truly and naturally. On the other hand, if anyone thinks it not worth while to learn this art, and has not even an idea of the subject, he will be constantly making mistakes in his delivery. The most common error is monotony or isotony, *i. e.*, employing only one tone of speech from start to finish; or equal emphasis on every sentence, neither raising nor lowering the voice throughout. This is a degradation of the human voice and makes it sound like a barrel-organ. There is the so-called "pulpit style," which affects a certain solemnity and dignity, but falls into a monotonous delivery, whether dealing with instructional matter, the commonplace remark, or the most moving words of the Saviour, narrative or exhortation, calls to penance or messages of joy. There are innumerable minor forms of this pulpit style: the weeping, mournful, fretful; querulous, boisterous, raving; skittish, sweet and precious, effeminate; the hollow, snorting, and sleepy style. Such do infinite harm in the sphere of homiletics; they make preaching unfruitful, drive the congregation to flight, offend the Christian people, and put

body and soul to sleep, instead of awakening them —giving them the living bread of life for strength and refreshment.

The delivery as well as the preparation of the sermon,—since they either promote or hinder and ruin its purpose,—should be matters of conscience. Knowledge of self and self-examination are prime requisites. It is as fatuous to be persuaded of one's infallibility and perfection as to consider that no one is capable of improvement. The only reasonable course is constant and severe self-discipline, mastery of our known defects, and continuous endeavour to attain perfection.

There need be no fear of mannerism or artificiality in this quest after a good delivery if a sense of duty and a pure intention are motive and aim. It is not a question of artistry or external polish, but of self-mastery, of the *castigatio vocis,* to which the Church alludes when bestowing the amice at the ordination of sub-deacons; the Christian's duty to govern his voice and speech, more especially when it is used as the organ of the Divine Word for the highest purpose.

Finally let the soul inspire the word and its delivery and penetrate, spiritualise, and glorify the

message: for it is the soul that can best tune and play upon this wonderful organ, enticing the most varied effects into sympathy with its vibrations, giving point to thought, gently pressing a demand, making an irresistible request, or pouring out comfort in human speech.

The labour spent in acquiring a good delivery is amply repaid. The beginner is advised, while memorising his subject, to practise voice culture and the dynamics of speech, so that he may know when he is required to use the ordinary voice and when an extraordinary effort should be made. The quality of the delivery renders the attention of the people either easy or burdensome. The power of attentive listening is not a strong point of our present nervous and distracted generation, which, living at high speed, finds it difficult to concentrate upon one point for any length of time. A warning is needed against straining the patience and attention of the hearers. A sermon, especially at High Mass, should not last longer than half an hour. This time-limit need not curtail the message of God's word: but should anyone think it impossible to be bound by this limitation, let him heed the drastic advice of Spurgeon: "If you were to

ask me how to set about preaching shorter sermons, I would answer, 'Make better preparation.' Spend more time in your study and you will need to spend less time in the pulpit. As a rule we preach the longest sermons when we have least to say. A preacher with a fair amount of well-prepared matter will most probably not need more than forty minutes; if he has less to say, his sermon will be extended to fifty minutes; and if he has absolutely nothing to say, he will require a whole hour." A good rule would be to develop only two points. What the sermon would lose in length, it would gain in power and in the sustained attention of the hearers. It is unreasonable to take pains to create a good impression, and then by undue length to produce weariness and annoyance.

To estimate its duration exactly, the sermon should be fully written out. For many reasons this course is to be recommended, especially in the case of beginners. It may be objected that a written sermon hampers free delivery, breaks the flow of speech, causes the speaker to be a stranger to his own words until he has to deliver them, creates exhaustion in the labour of memorising, which re-

sults, after many tiresome attempts, in a futile endeavour to enliven cold and dead material. Such objections do not carry weight. It is nearer the truth to say that a merely mental preparation, based on notes, almost necessarily leads to confusion and loss of form, and that real and worthy freedom of speech is only won by careful preparation and—at least at first—committing the sermon verbatim to memory. A merely mechanical learning by heart followed by a mechanical recital from memory is certainly to be avoided. The written sermon must be infused with life, and an effective delivery assured by ardent prayer and deep meditation.

XXI

ΜΕΤΑ ΠΑΣΗΣ ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑΣ

Preachers easily get tired of preaching. Nor need we wonder at this. Does it not seem as if the office of preaching were never more onerous, the result more doubtful, the harvest scantier than at the present time?

Many a preacher might be tempted to adopt the words of Moses and Aaron: "Hear ye rebellious and incredulous, can we bring you forth water out of this rock?" (Num. XX, 10.) One might almost believe that the time had come of which the Apostle writes, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and will be turned away from the truth, and be turned unto fables (2 Tim. IV, 3). In a melancholy mood the preacher might exclaim: "What a generation! Filled with curiosity and an insatiable desire to know earthly things, but dull and without interest in eternal truth; instinctively re-

pelled by allusions to authority, law, and order; absurdly fearful of anything that might prevent the free play of self-determination, yet childishly incapable of determining themselves; dependent on moods and inclinations; doubtful and critical; superficial in thought, will, and act; nervously susceptible; feverish in pursuit of distraction, amusement, and change; cowardly avoiding the earnest purpose of life; either angry or miserably disconsolate when troubles come; inwardly discontented, a plague to their own selves, yet disinclined to seek instruction, advice, and help; and latterly disabused of their former confidence by the systematic contempt in which the priesthood is held by the enemies of the Church and false brethren."

A preacher might be affected by this kind of pessimism and ask: "Shall we be able to strike water out of the rock of eternal truth to satisfy a generation such as this?" But we must not overlook the real facts of the case. The question was natural for Moses and Aaron to put, yet God laid it to their guilt, and they were punished by exclusion from the promised land. "Because you have not believed me, to sanctify me before the children

of Israel, you shall not bring this people into the land which I will give them." (Num. XX, 12.)

One might be tempted to complain like Elias: "I am full of zeal for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, and thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets and the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away." But the prophet received a stern reproof in answer to his complaint. His impetuous zeal is rebuked and he is told that the presence of God is revealed not in the rock-splitting earthquake, nor in the tempest, nor in the fire, but in a still small voice. His pessimism is shown to be unjust and unfounded, for he is not alone on God's side,—there are 7000 others who have not bowed their knees to Baal. (3 Kings XIX, 9 sqq.)

It is well to take to heart these biblical warnings against pessimism. Pessimism is indeed the worst enemy of our sacred office. Its power to harm rests upon its untruth, injustice, and unjustifiable claims. It is quite possible that the description of modern society given above may be correct in its separate indictments, but as a general statement it is one-sided, superficial, and incomplete. Unfav-

ourable symptoms are compensated by others more favourable; obstacles are rarely insurmountable, and most difficulties can be met and overcome. Even the unfavourable psychic and ethical complex of the modern age can be used as a means of preparing the way for the grace of God.

We must not overlook the ardent desire of humanity for spiritual food, for truth and light and certainty and order; their longing for peace and quietude, and eternity; their salutary conviction of eternal truth and of a God-appointed authority arousing their cries for help, redemption, God. There are to be found in every congregation the absent-minded and the sleepy, but their presence and dulness need not disturb us, since they are mostly exceptions. The majority of listeners are attentive, seekers after salvation, questioning, hungering, thirsting souls, yearning for the truth even as the soil yearns for the early rain. We notice from the pulpit not only reverence of attention, but the lighting up of intelligent eyes, and we almost hear the heart-beats of those whose countenances attest that they are intensively co-operating with us in spirit.

Quiet and close observation of present conditions and of the disposition of our audience will leave no ground for pessimism. On the contrary, we shall be able to exclaim with the Apostle in high confidence: *"Ostium nobis apertum est magnum et evidens (efficax) et adversarii multi."* (1 Cor. XVI, 9.) *"Et adversarii multi"* does not suppress, but raises our confidence; for our opponents must eventually become unwilling confederates who will open and widen the door for us.

But our confidence does not lie in such considerations alone, but has its deepest cause in the weighty words of the Apostle: *"Non erubesco Evangelium: virtus Dei est."* (Rom. I, 16). What is at stake ultimately is not my word, my cause, or my person. We may say with the Saviour: *"Mea doctrina non est mea, sed ejus, qui misit me."* (John VII, 16.) The commission, the doctrine, the authority are all from God. Boldly may I say to Him who sent me: *"Tua res agitur."* I have an official claim upon His assistance. According to the purity of intention with which I exercise my office and which I bring to the preaching of each sermon; according to the degree of humility with which I place my will and ability at

God's service; according to the reverence and modesty with which I treat the word of God and clothe it in my own words, will my sermon rise above myself, and the power of God be made manifest in it and through it, and the prophecy be fulfilled: "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and return not thither, but soak the earth, and cause it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things for which I sent it." (Is. LV, 10 sq.).

Let us consider the supernatural dignity, beauty, glory of our office: that in the fulness of truth it may illumine our souls. What can be compared to it? We are heralds of God, ambassadors of Christ, organs of the Divine Logos. To us is entrusted the divine revelation, that we may make it known in this twentieth century; endowed with wonderful credentials, it is our duty to provide mankind with the spiritual nourishment that it needs and that all the wisdom of this world is unable to supply. We can and should dispense

rays of comfort and light to the most forsaken soul in the poorest hut; we can and should relieve those oppressed by the burden of daily life and lift them up to the purer air of their eternal home; we can and should awaken guilty consciences, pardon penitent sinners, lead wanderers on the right way, incite the will to action, inspire the heart of men with love of God and neighbour, and stir them to virtue and sacrifice. It is our duty to form and educate the people in the highest sense of the word, to maintain them in communion with the world to come, in intercourse with their heavenly Father, and in union with the Son of God made man. We should call together the warriors of God and, leading them to battle for the extension of the Kingdom of God, for the defeat and conquest of evil, to consolidate the foundations of the social order and to promote the welfare of the fatherland. To quote a liberal Protestant preacher: "The thought that we are allowed week by week for half an hour to address immortal souls and speak to them of the highest and most glorious of all things in Heaven and earth that can move the soul,—does not, should not this thought flood our heart with enthusiasm and joy?"

Yet fatigue and weariness may sometimes befall the preacher. It may be the result of physical infirmity, or depression of spirits, or overwork, or that sense of boredom that is produced by the perpetual recurrence of regular duties, which, with ever shortening intervals, demand our personal responsibility and all our powers. We must rid ourselves of this kind of fatigue, which may easily lead to bitterness of spirit and pessimism.

There is a feeling of weariness that arises from nobler causes, rooted in a deep sense of one's own inadequacy and imperfection—a dissatisfaction with oneself and one's achievements. There is no denying how far removed one's own efforts are from the ideal and the example of the great master preachers. This depressing realisation may even be intensified by our homiletic studies and reading. It may accompany us to and from the pulpit. We find ourselves face to face with an endless, gigantic task, and are tempted to ask whether we shall ever accomplish it satisfactorily. There may be a certain amount of truth and goodness in these self-depreciative thoughts; even the blessing of humility. Moments of faintness befall the strongest among us: let us not be dismayed or

ask or expect to be excused. Our Saviour endured such moments for us in Gethsemane. Like Him, let us win spiritual strength out of physical weakness, by prayer and wrestling, and from suffering learn a lesson that we may convert into comfort for the members of our congregation. These conflicts against depression are a necessary part of the schooling and training of every preacher.

For the rest, the exalted character of our office should elevate rather than depress us. Ideals are intended to attract, not to alarm us. To shut one's eyes to them and accept the line of mediocrity on the frontier of endeavour is very soon to fall below mediocrity and below our capacity. Ideals by their very nature remain in the distance. Sad and depressing experiences do not justify pessimism, but should urge us to examine our conscience as to the real cause of our failure in preaching. That cause may be found to lie in our own selves, in careless and inadequate preparation. Are we offering bread, manna freshly fallen from heaven, or mostly chaff? Is our delivery defective? We may think that we have grounds for complaining of inattention, and be unaware that it is our own fault. It is also possible to be over-anxious about

results. Joyfully and free from worry, the sower hopefully scatters his seeds, nor does he look to see where each single grain falls. Thus should the preacher do his duty and leave the rest to God. No one working for God ever worked in vain.

A man is bound to approach ideals to the extent of his talent and powers. The main point is never to lose sight of them, never to cease struggling onwards and upwards to attain them. "It is required among the dispensers, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. IV, 2). Upon his fidelity it will depend whether he exercises this office conscientiously, employs both the natural and the supernatural means appointed, and places his talents at the disposal of the Master. More is not demanded, and this fidelity can be rendered by every God-appointed steward, for it is independent of the talent one possesses, and is not contingent on health or temperament or any other external factor, but solely on the will and on the energy and purity of intention.

No one, and nothing in the world,—not even our own weakness,—should damp our zeal and our delight in proclaiming the word of God. We may at times feel as if we were, in the Apostolic

phrase, "bound with fetters," but the Gospel is not fettered. (*"Verbum Dei non est alligatum"*; 2 Tim. II, 9), nor must our preaching suffer any bondage. We must break the fetters and burst the bonds with the fresh and joyous strength of that virtue which figures so often in the Acts and Epistles, as a special grace of prayer and preaching, yet seems to have fallen into desuetude.

I mean the virtue of παρρησία. There is more in it than is conveyed by the Latin *"fiducia."* As the specific virtue of preaching, παρρησία includes an open-hearted, willing readiness, a confidence firmly founded on conviction and unconditional trust in God, which inspires the preacher to proclaim the divine word.

Very necessary at the present time is this παρρησία! Like a morning breeze it will dispel the fog of pessimism and weariness and all low conceptions of our high office, and awaken a heroic and chivalrous desire to serve the cause without regard to one's own person; it will drive away the gloomy, inert, melancholy style which depresses many a sermon to the level of a lamentation or panegyric on a forlorn cause, and contribute a clear and ringing call, as of the trumpet

to the battle, and as the shout of victory. *"Haec est victoria quae vincit mundum: fides nostra."* (1 Jno. V, 4.) The word of the preacher becomes powerful to convince and to save.

We owe our people a fearless, heartfelt, joyful and decisive profession of faith. Such a profession will act as a security against the attacks and doubts to which they are exposed, and the conviction of the preacher will give conviction to the hearer and confidence (παρρησία) in believing, in the confession of faith and in the life of faith.

Ralph Waldo Trine recalls an episode from the life of Napoleon I. His army was in the East and the plague had begun its ravages. Whole divisions had succumbed. Fear invaded the hearts of the soldiers and made them tremble. Napoleon, surrounded by his officers urging him to give the order to retreat, since to advance meant certain death, with quiet, fearless mien and firm steps walked through the ranks. He spoke to the men, and when they saw him thus unperturbed, they broke out into the exclamation: *"Vive l'Empereur!"* At that moment the plague was broken. What a wonderful example of human strength

which enables a man by his courage and fearlessness to infuse such a spirit into thousands, dominating their bodies and robbing plague and death of their hold upon them!

If such be the effect of will-power in one single individual, influencing thousands and imparting courage to all in a worldly cause, are we not capable of similar,—nay mightier, because spiritual —influence? Are we not called to leadership in the greater campaign against the spirits of darkness? Our people are threatened with the plague of unbelief and immorality. Every Sunday our office demands that we stand up and speak to them: not in human words of comfort and courage, but in demonstration of the spirit and with power from on high. Can we doubt whether our preaching will be effective? If it were not, it would be attributable to our own weakness.

Thousands of pulpits are ours, surrounded by thousands of men. Thousands of sermons are preached every Sunday and holyday—and yet we doubt whether preaching is still a power? If it were not, verily the guilt would lie on us and our doubting: because we doubt instead of hoping, praying, and working: because we de-

spair and preach without courage and power and joy, instead of speaking to our people every Sunday μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας, and instilling into them the power and courage of our faith, awakening them to a like assurance and rendering them immune from the plague that is ravaging the world.

Μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας. Let pessimism, doubt, and weakness come to an end. Our only care and concern should be that which moved the heart of the Apostle: *"ut sermo Dei currat"*—"that the word of God may have free course and be glorified" (2 Thess. III, 1); and that this may be the case, we should pray as the Apostle enjoins, for prayer is ever the first essential homiletic force. Unto this end we need to exert all our energy, devote ourselves, sacrifice everything, that the word of God may not appear backward and behindhand in this progressive age, or be superseded and outrun by the progress, whether of science or the arts, as with the lightning speed of electricity it flows on earth and in the air; but that it may have "free course," unfettered, unimpeded, inexhaustible, even as that stream which the prophet Ezechiel beheld issuing from beneath the temple-threshold, until it be-

came a river whose waters brought life and health whithersoever they flowed.

"*Ut currat et glorificetur.*" The word of God shall be glorified: and we will contribute our best efforts to that end. It shall be glorified in the unfolding of its light and power and life; glorified in strength and courage and enthusiasm and grace, and the παρρησία of our message glorified in the reception and faith and life of our people; glorified in fruit and conquest and victory.

That the word of God may have free course and be glorified, is the sole aim and purpose of these "homiletic thoughts and counsels." We conclude our reflections on present-day preaching with the words of the Apostle: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. XV, 58.)

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